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DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE



COUNTERTERRORIST CENTER

TERRORISM REVIEW

JULY 1996

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Terrorism Review

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This review is published monthly by the DCI Counterterrorist Center. Comments and queries are welcome and may be directed to

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Khobar Bombing: Saudi Oppositionists and Iran Major Suspects

The 25 June truck bomb attack at Khubar Towers, Dhahran, which resulted in the death of 19 US citizens and the wounding of approximately 500 US and foreign nationals, appears to have been well planned and executed. The Saudi investigation seems to be focused on a group led by a Saudi Shia resident in Lebanon named Ahmad Mughassil. Other reports point to Saudi Sunni militants—primarily renegade Saudi terrorist financier Usama Bin Ladin—but also implicates the Committee for the Defense of Legitimate Rights (CDLR), a London-based Saudi dissident organization. Iran is another credible culprit, having been noted collecting intelligence recently on US facilities and suspected by Riyadh of having assisted Saudi Shia under investigation in the bombing.

In spite of increased security measures and heightened threat awareness among the US military and civilian populations in Saudi Arabia, they will remain attractive targets for terrorists. The groups who claimed credit for the Khubar and Riyadh bombings have threatened further attacks, and the perpetrators have demonstrated a capability to strike even relatively secure facilities.

A Well-Executed Attack

The exceptionally powerful explosion outside the security fence of the Khubar Barracks destroyed the facade and the lower floors of one building and damaged other buildings within a 5-km radius. Based on the size of the crater—approximately 26 meters wide and 11 meters deep—the Federal Bureau of Investigation believes that this may be the largest explosion their investigators have ever encountered. The Khubar facility housed most of the approximately 2,500 US forces, as well as 170 French and 310 British servicemen, responsible for monitoring the no-fly zone over southern Iraq.

This well-executed attack may have been planned for several months. Personnel at the Khubar facility had reported numerous incidents over the past eight

months—the latest on 24 June—of surveillance and harassment by young Arab males. These incidents appear to have been efforts to test the facility's defenses and the guards' reaction times:

- The events included firing shots, crashing the perimeter fence, and taking photos, as well as other forms of surveillance. The hostile actions occurred between 2000 and 2400 local time.
- Security at the facility already had been heightened following the 13 November 1995 bombing of the US Office of the Program Manager, Saudi Arabian National Guard (OPM/SANG) building in Riyadh, and US military personnel reported that Saudi police planned to take further steps as a result of these recent incidents.

Possible Suspects

Saudi Shia. We have no definitive information indicating who was responsible for the bombing, although the Saudi-led investigation is focusing on a Saudi Shia, Ahmad Mughassil, a.k.a. Abu Ishaq, living in Lebanon's Bekaa Valley. The Saudis say they have obtained information from interrogations of individuals they have arrested—both before and after the bombing—that links Mughassil to a shipment of explosives from Lebanon to Saudi Arabia seized in March 1995, and possibly to the OPM/SANG bombing:

- The Saudis believe that Mughassil directed the explosives smuggling operation, that he possesses a Lebanese passport and perhaps an Iranian one, and that he may take directions from Iran. The Saudis at first thought Mughassil had fled to Iran but received subsequent information that he was still in Syria.
- Riyadh has been seeking Syrian assistance in extraditing Mughassil from Lebanon since at least early April for questioning about the shipment of explosives to the kingdom. They have redoubled their efforts since the Khubar bombing.

Not Ruling Out Iraq [redacted]

Although we have no reporting linking Iraq to Khubar, the bombing coincided with the third anniversary of the US attack on the Iraqi Intelligence Service Headquarters:^a

- *Iraqi officials have explicitly threatened retaliation for the US strike, and repeated those threats on the second anniversary of the strike.*
- *The US servicemen serving with Joint Task Force/ South West Asia, who are tasked with enforcing the UN-mandated no-fly zone in southern Iraq, are a logical target for Iraqi retaliation* [redacted]

^a *The attack on Iraq's IS headquarters occurred before dawn on 26 June 1993. Although the Khubar bombing was on the evening of 25 June, the sun had already set, signifying the beginning of the next Islamic day.* [redacted]

Because we have no independent information on Mughassil, we cannot corroborate that he or his compatriots carried out the Khubar bombing. The Saudis have not shown US officials their evidence in the Khubar bombing nor have they provided many details on the investigation. Indeed, when they do provide information, much of it is dated and often contradicts earlier reporting. [redacted]

Saudi Sunni. Another body of information points to Saudi Sunni as possible culprits, primarily noted Saudi renegade and terrorist financier Usama Bin Ladin. Saudi security officials have told us that their investigators are looking into Bin Ladin's possible complicity in the bombing. [redacted]

[redacted] Bin Ladin has several cells in Saudi Arabia. [redacted]

Other information links the London-based Committee for the Defense of Legitimate Rights (CDLR) more directly to both the Khubar attack and the Riyadh bombing:

- On 26 June an unidentified Arab man phoned the al-Arab newspaper in London claiming responsibility for the Khubar attack on behalf of the "Legion of

the Martyr Abdallah al-Hudaif." The caller also claimed responsibility for the bombing in Riyadh and promised further terrorist acts unless the Saudi Government expelled US and other foreign troops. Abdallah al-Hudaif was a CDLR supporter who was executed in August 1995 for throwing acid on a Saudi officer. Saudi security forces claim that CDLR leaders ordered al-Hudaif's actions against Saudi officials:

- Following Abdallah al-Hudaif's execution, the CDLR called al-Hudaif the first martyr "in the five-year struggle for legitimate rights in Saudi Arabia" and said that the killing "marks a dangerously momentous turn in the struggle between the regime and the reform movement . . . the consequences will be extremely disadvantageous."
- In mid-March 1996, during an acrimonious public debate between CDLR leader Masari and his deputy, Sa'd al-Faqih, Faqih accused Masari of supporting a secret military wing of the CDLR, headed by a Shia, which he said was responsible for the bombing in Riyadh. [redacted]

Iran. Iran's vociferous denunciation of the US military presence in the region, coupled with its demonstrated preparedness to use terrorism as a policy tool, raises a possibility of Tehran being behind the Khubar bombing. Information compiled from various sources since the spring of 1995 indicates increased Iranian surveillance and collection of targeting information on US personnel and installations worldwide, particularly in the Middle East. Although Iran may have developed a program in Saudi Arabia designed to threaten US interests, we cannot link any known Iranian operation to the Khubar bombing. [redacted]

The Iranians may be connected, however, to Saudi Shia under suspicion in the Khubar investigation. Saudi officials believe that Mughassil has strong family ties to Lebanese Hizballah and has been in contact with the office of Iranian Supreme Leader Khamenei. A Jordanian service reports that an alleged Hizballah leader named Ahmad Ali Zayb Zahir—whom we have not been able to identify—stated on 26 June that the bombing was carried out by Saudi Shias with links to

Domestic Political Concerns Hampering Investigation Cooperation [redacted]

The bombing in Dhahran occurred at a time when domestic political considerations increasingly are battering the Saudi Government and exposing its vulnerabilities. Sensitive to the appearance of ceding responsibility for the investigation to Washington and wary of possible leaks by US investigators, some Saudi leaders have been reluctant to share information connected to the blast in an attempt to limit negative domestic political repercussions. In addition, Saudi officials appear to view the blast largely as an internal Saudi matter and therefore balk at passing information to US counterparts out of concern that such action would infringe on Riyadh's sovereignty:

[redacted] the Saudi Interior Minister intends to restrict information on the bombing investigation from US authorities—especially the FBI—because he wants the Saudis to get full credit for the eventual capture of the culprits and because he wants to limit US access to junior Saudi officers who may divulge more details than authorized. [redacted]

Riyadh's close relationship with the United States and the presence of US forces in the kingdom, which regime opponents have criticized repeatedly since the Gulf war, have become a stinging political liability in recent months. [redacted] Saudi public dissatisfaction with the United States has intensified sharply since April because of what many perceive as

Washington's lack of reaction to Israel's campaign in Lebanon in April, as well as US support for the newly elected Netanyahu government:

[redacted] in May that his countrymen regularly demanded his explanation of what Riyadh is doing to confront Washington regarding its policies in the region.

- Attempting to stoke this sentiment, CDLR leader Masari repeatedly has called the US presence in Saudi Arabia "illegitimate" and has warned that attacks against US troops in the kingdom will continue [redacted]

Recognizing these political sensitivities, Riyadh has sought both to mask information that the blast was directed at US troops and to minimize its impact. The government-controlled Saudi press only listed US citizens among the many nationalities who suffered, [redacted] and neither Crown Prince Abdallah nor Minister of Defense and Aviation Sultan—the country's two most senior leaders after the King—have visited the bombing site. If, as now seems probable, [redacted]

information suggesting that the homegrown opposition is more organized and sophisticated than Riyadh previously realized, Saudi officials will seek to avoid public exposure of this knowledge. [redacted]

Hizballah and Iran. We have previous reporting of Iranian support to Saudi Shia:

- There are indications that the Iranian Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps' Lebanon contingent gave unspecified training in 1995 to Shia oppositionists from Saudi Arabia and Bahrain.
- [redacted] in the summer of 1995, the Iranian Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps held a two-month-long military training course for 16 Saudi Shia in a Hizballah camp in Lebanon [redacted]

Further Terrorist Attacks Likely [redacted]

Threats and other statements directed against the US presence in Saudi Arabia, some made by suspects in the Khubar bombing, underscore the significant danger of further terrorism against US interests in the kingdom:

- US civilians in the Dhahran area—including US employees of ARAMCO and McDonnell Douglas—have reported receiving telephone threats since the attack.

- CDLR leader Masari said on 4 July that “if there are enough attacks or if US civilians start to arrive home in body bags, the United States will have to weigh up its presence in Saudi Arabia.”
- Bin Ladin told a British newspaper that attacks on US personnel in Saudi Arabia were the “beginning of war between Muslims and the United States,” and advised France and the United Kingdom also to withdraw troops stationed there. He also claimed that Muslim religious leaders have given him a *fatwa* (religious authorization) to “drive out the Americans.” [redacted]

US facilities and personnel in Saudi Arabia are likely to remain attractive targets. For all of the major suspects in the bombing, attacks against US interests in the kingdom have the added benefit of undermining the credibility of the Saudi regime. The Khubar bombing demonstrates that anti-US terrorists can strike even relatively secure facilities in the kingdom. In addition to the roughly 6,000 military personnel in Saudi Arabia, there are more than 40,000 US civilians who would also present tempting—and easier—targets. [redacted]

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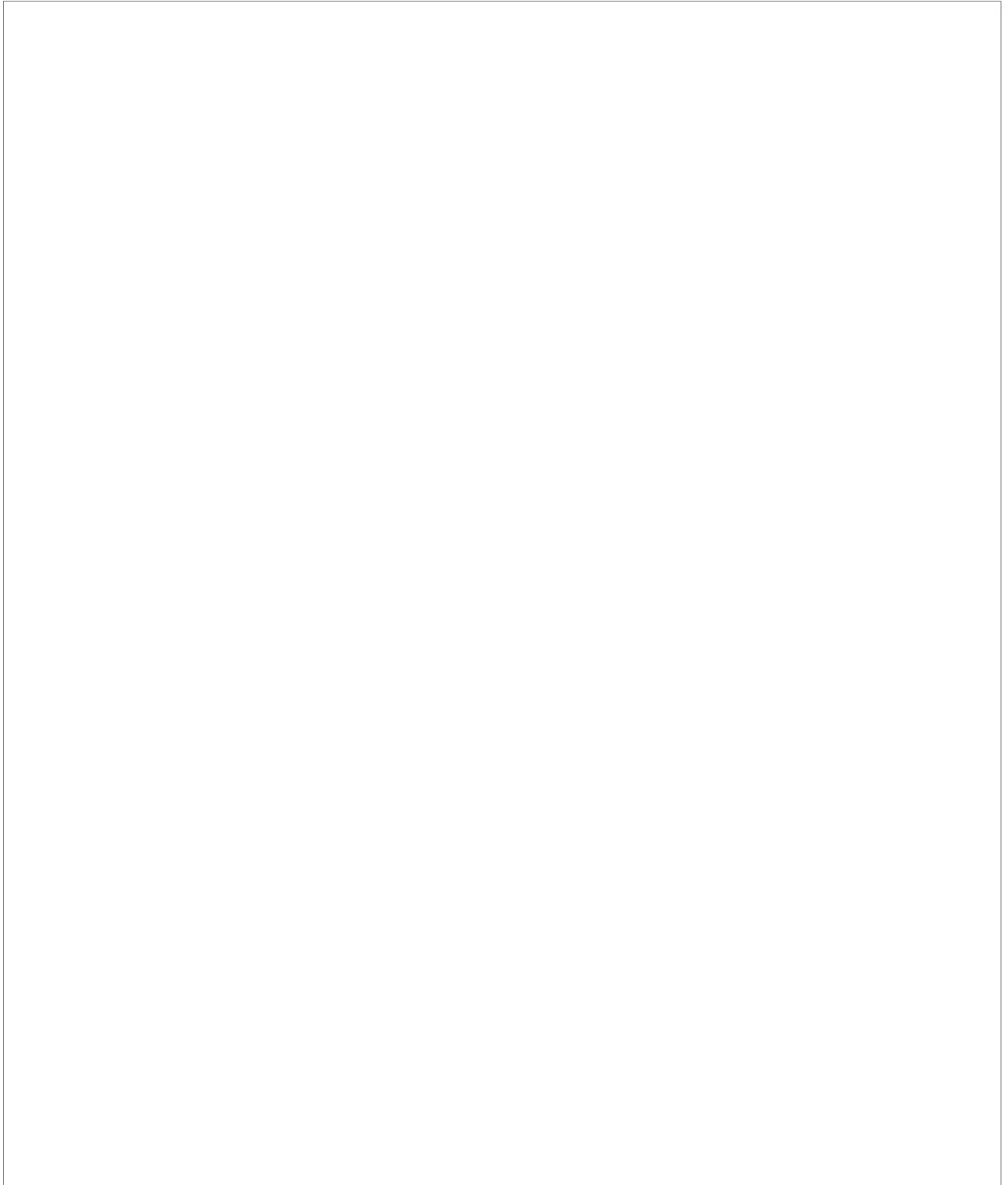


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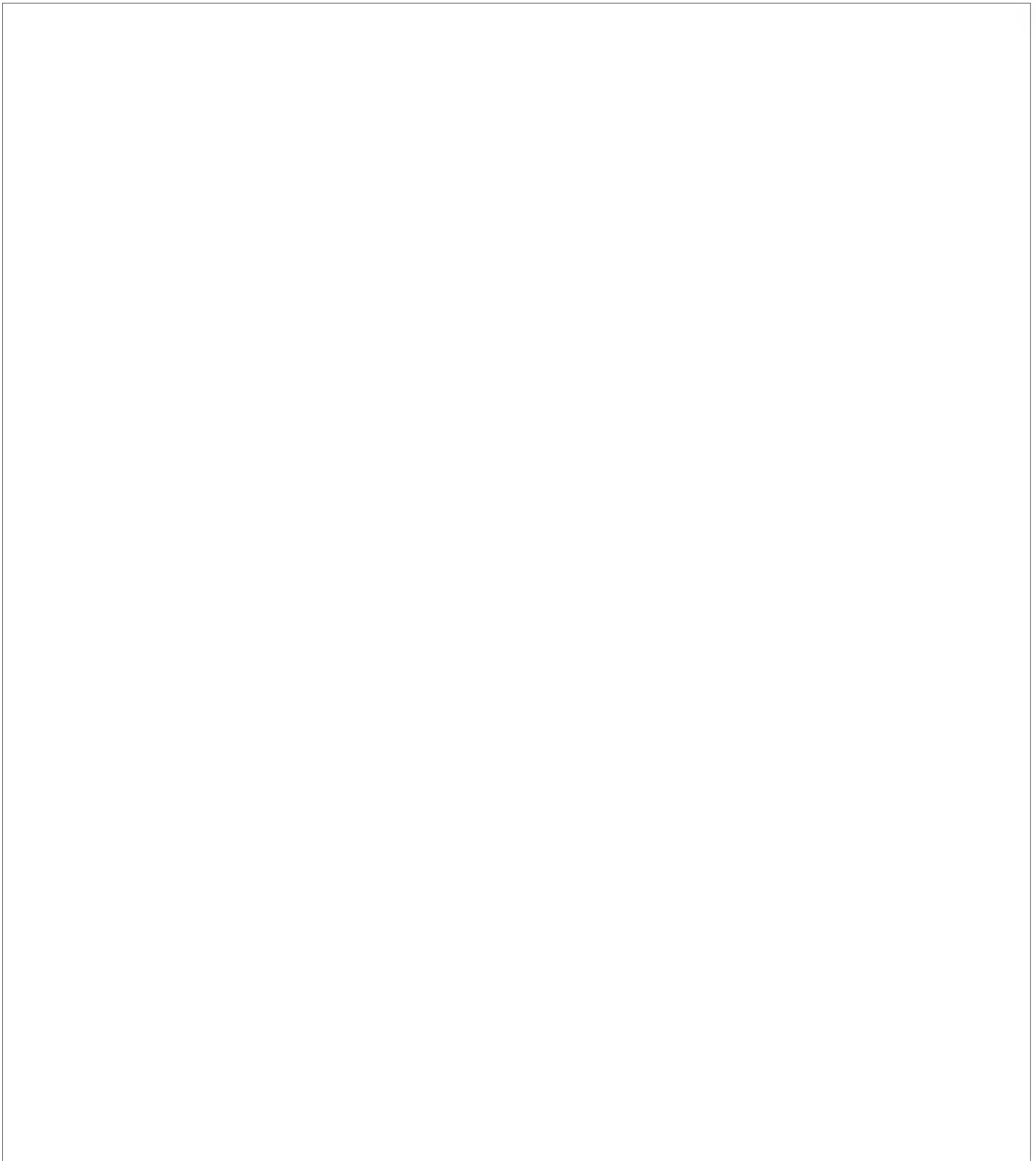


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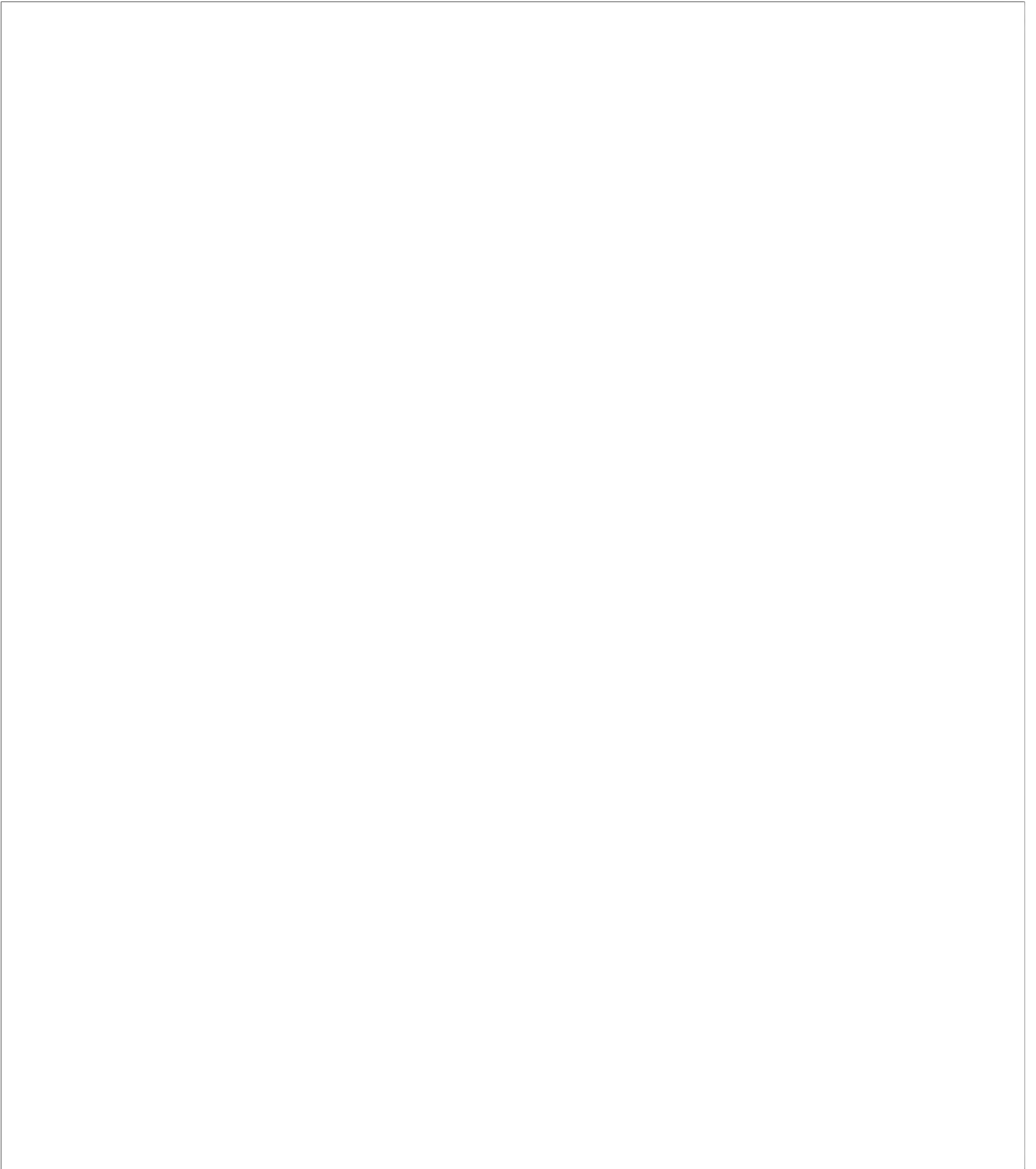


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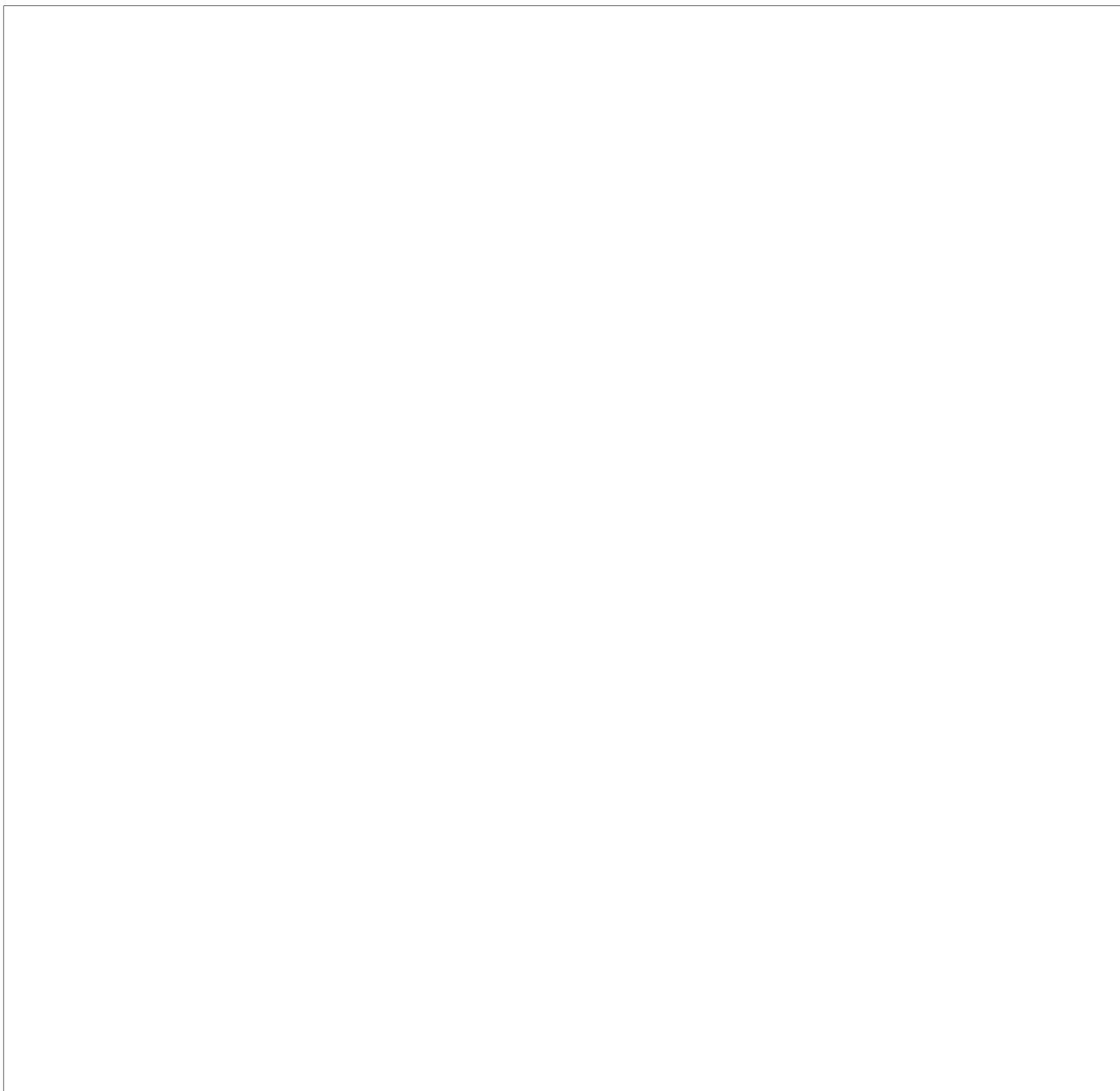


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Highlights

Significant Developments

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The Terrorism Diary for August and September

Below is a compendium of August and September dates of known or conceivable significance to terrorists around the world. Our inclusion of a date or event should not by itself be construed to suggest that we expect or anticipate a commemorative terrorist event.

2 August 1990	Iraq/Kuwait. Iraq invades Kuwait.
6 August 1825	Bolivia. Independence Day.
6 August 1966	United Arab Emirates. Accession Day of Shaikh Zayed bin Sultan al-Nayhan, Emir of Abu Dhabi.
11 August 1952	Jordan. Accession Day for King Hussein.
12 August 1689	Northern Ireland. Protestant commemorative marches mark day apprentice boys locked gates of Derry against James II's forces.
13 August 1984	Morocco/Libya. Union established.
14 August 1947	Pakistan. Independence Day.
15 August 1947	India. Independence Day.
15 August 1964	Colombia. Pro-Castro guerrilla movement, the National Liberation Army (ELN), begins armed struggle.
15 August 1971	Bahrain. Independence Day.
20 August 1953	Morocco. King's and People's Revolution.
31 August 1978	Libya/Shia world. Lebanese Shia cleric Imam Musa Sadr disappears in Libya.
31 August 1980	Poland. Solidarity trade union founded.
1 September 1939	Germany, Europe. Antiwar Day (anniversary of Nazi invasion of Poland).
1 September 1969	Libya. Coup overthrows monarchy.
September 1970	Palestinians. During this month, the Jordanian Army drove Palestinian guerrillas out of the country because they would not stop attacking Israel from Jordanian soil; in response, the largest group, Fatah, established the Black September Organization, best known for its attack on Israeli athletes at the 1972 Olympics.
3 September 1971	Qatar. Independence Day.

3 September 1982	Peru. Death of Sendero Luminoso (SL) leader Edith Lagos.
4 September 1980	Iran, Iraq. Date Iraq charges Iran started war.
8 September 1982	India. Death of Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah, "the Lion of Kashmir."
10 September 1922	Turkey. Founding of Turkish Communist Party.
14 September 1982	Lebanon. Assassination of Phalangist leader and Lebanese President-elect Bashir Gemayel.
15 September 1982	Lebanon. Israeli invasion of Muslim West Beirut.
17 September 1978	United States, Israel, Egypt. Signing of Camp David accords.
17 September 1982	Lebanon. Massacre in Shatila and Sabra refugee camps (17 September Organization takes its name from this event).
21 September 1989	Saudi Arabia. Execution of 16 Kuwaiti shias for <i>hajj</i> bombings that sparked anti-Saudi retaliatory attacks.
23 September 1932	Saudi Arabia. Unification of the kingdom.
23 September 1964	Saudi Arabia. National Day.
25 September 1984	Egypt, Jordan. Resumption of diplomatic relations.
27 September	Spain. Basque National Party Day.
28 September 1970	Egypt. Death of Jamal 'Abd al-Nasir.
30 September 1996	Israel, Jewish world. Day of Atonement. Anniversary of 1973 Arab-Israeli war, according to the Hebrew calendar.



Chronology of International Terrorism

The following incidents were considered by the Intelligence Community's Incident Review Panel since publication of the previous issue of the Terrorism Review and were determined by the Panel to constitute international terrorism. Such incidents provide the basis for the State Department's Patterns of Global Terrorism, which is published annually as the US Government's official record of international terrorism

Eurasia

24 April

Poland: A bomb placed at a Shell gas station in Warsaw detonated, killing one policeman preparing to defuse the device. A group calling itself GN 95 later claimed responsibility, demanding \$2 million from the Royal Dutch Shell Group. The GN 95 justified the attack by stating its opposition to expansion of foreign investment in Poland.

Europe

26 May

Spain: Unknown assailants set fire to several French-registered vehicles in the Basque towns of Guipuzcoa and Vitoria. Spanish police suspect Jarrai, the Basque Fatherland and Liberty (ETA) militant youth wing.

Latin America

11 May

Colombia: *In Santa Marta, National Liberation Army (ELN) guerrillas attacked a cargo train, injuring the train's driver. The rebels also burned machinery belonging to a Colombian-Brazilian engineering company.* [redacted]

16 May

Peru: *Sendero Luminoso (SL) terrorists detonated a car bomb, injuring at least four persons and destroying a portion of Shell-Mobil offices and a warehouse in Lima. The explosion at a Shell gas station destroyed five automobiles and damaged six Shell tankers filled with fuel. Three days earlier, the Peruvian Government had announced an agreement with a consortium led by the US Mobil Corporation and Royal Dutch Shell to develop the expansive Camisea gas reserves. SL terrorists left behind leaflets lauding the group and the armed struggle and proclaiming "No to the sale of the country."* [redacted]

31 May

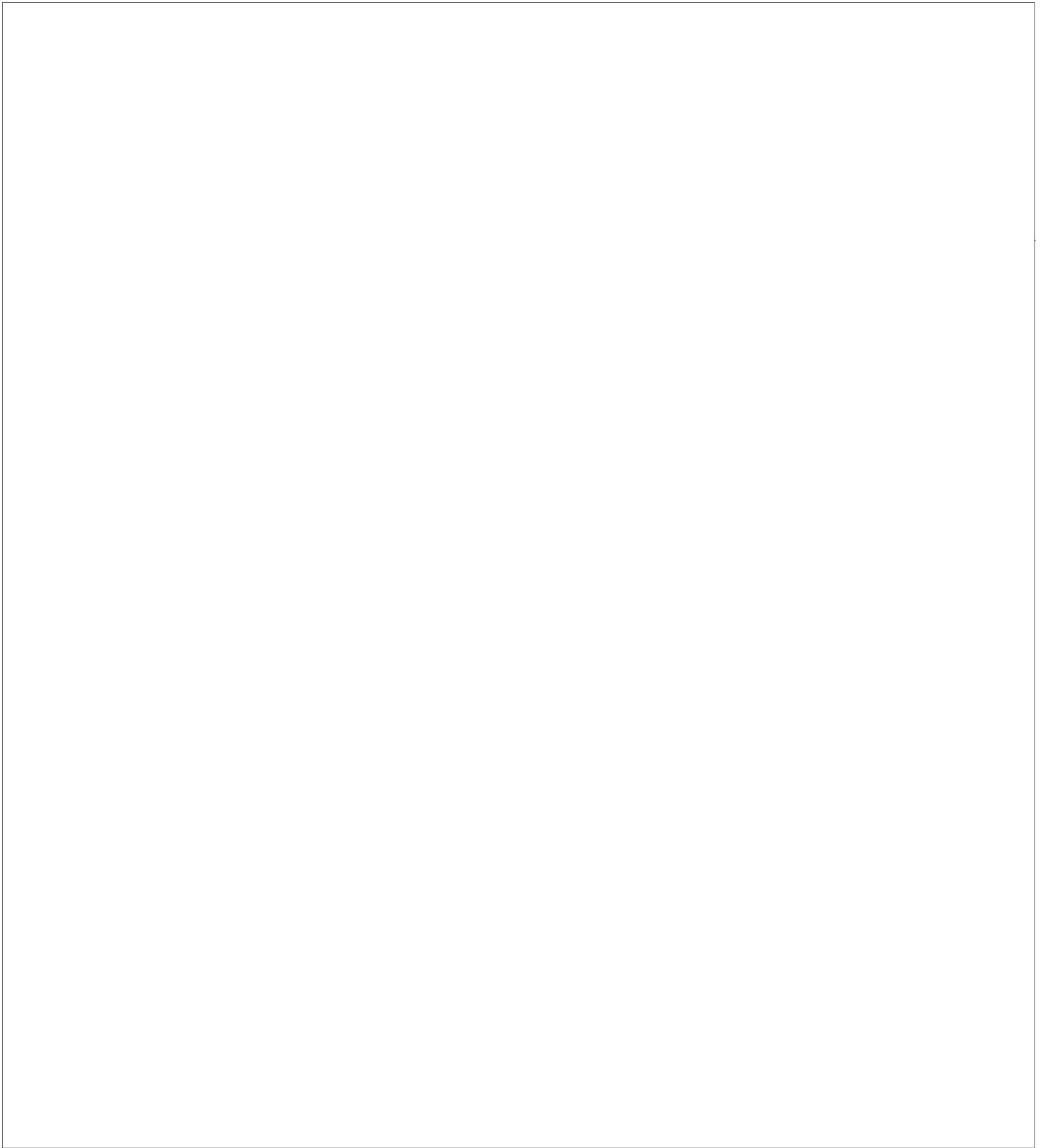
Nicaragua: *In Piedras Blancas, two members of a rearmed former Contras group kidnapped a USAID official and a Nicaraguan companion. The US citizen was part of an international observer group monitoring the voter registration process. The kidnappers demanded more polling stations. On 1 June both hostages were released. No demands were met to secure their release, but a team from the Supreme Electoral Council already in the area was apparently going to meet with one of the kidnappers* [redacted]

Middle East

13 May

Israel: *Arab gunmen opened fire on a bus and a group of Yeshiva students near the Bet El settlement, killing a dual US/Israeli citizen and wounding three other Israelis. No one claimed responsibility for the attack. The Islamic Resistance Movement (HAMAS) is suspected.* [redacted]

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Summary of Indigenous Terrorism—June 1996

This description of incidents and situations is not meant to be a detailed accounting of all domestic terrorist incidents, but rather to provide an overview of indigenous terrorism worldwide

Africa

Angola

The *Front for the Liberation of the Cabinda-Renewed (FLEC-R)* kidnapped 43 youths from a Catholic Church in Cabinda on 12 June

Ethiopia

A bomb exploded along the Ethiopia-Djibouti rail line on 20 June, killing one person and wounding five others. A mine planted under the rail caused the explosion that ripped through a freight train destined for Dire Dawa from Djibouti. No one claimed responsibility for the attack

Nigeria

On 4 June unidentified assailants shot and killed the wife of detained presidential claimant Moshood Abiola in Lagos. The victim was campaigning for the release of her husband who is facing trial on treason charges for declaring himself president.

Zambia

A bomb exploded on 6 June at Lusaka International Airport, killing one police officer and injuring another. Authorities believe the *Black Mamba* may be responsible

Asia

Afghanistan

On 16 June in Jalalabad a bomb placed on a bicycle exploded, killing two persons and injuring 25 others. No one claimed responsibility for the attack

India

Twenty suspected Kashmiri militants armed with rifles, axes, and knives killed 10 Hindu villagers on 8 June in the Kalmari village in the district of Doda. The *Harakat ul-Ansar (HUA)* is suspected.

Philippines

A bomb exploded on a passenger bus near Kharian on 17 June, killing two persons and wounding nine others. No one claimed responsibility for the attack

On 13 June in Manila four unidentified gunmen shot and killed a former intelligence chief who was linked to human rights abuses under the late President Marcos's regime

Sri Lanka

More than 200 *Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE)* rebels killed 14 civilians and set their houses on fire on 10 June in Lunuoya, Elavankulam, a northwestern village

Europe

Spain

On 11 June assailants set fire to a public bus in Portugalete, causing extensive material damage but no injuries. The *Basque Fatherland and Liberty (ETA)* is suspected. []

The *ETA* claimed responsibility for a parcel bomb that detonated on 12 June in Madrid, injuring a high court judge []

A car bomb exploded in an underground garage in Lorea on 19 June, injuring three persons. The device detonated when a garage employee went to move a vehicle. *ETA* involvement is suspected. []

Turkey

A bomb detonated on 7 June outside an Istanbul hotel, causing major damage. The *Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK)* is suspected []

Suspected *PKK* militants attacked a dam and a hydroelectric station under construction in Tunceli on 8 June, killing two workers. The assailants killed five security officers and wounded four others. []

On 16 June three gunmen, riding in a stolen taxi, shot at a police vehicle parked in front of former Prime Minister Tansu Ciller's residence in Istanbul's Yenikoy district, wounding a policeman. The *Revolutionary People's Liberation Party/Front (DHKP/C)* claimed responsibility for the attack []

Three armed assailants attacked the True Path Party's Istanbul headquarters on 18 June, causing minor damage. Before they fled the scene, the assailants left behind a bomb that failed to detonate. The *DHKP/C* is suspected. []

Four *PKK* gunmen threw handgrenades and opened fire on patrons of an outdoor restaurant in Diyarbakir on 22 June, killing seven persons and wounding 11 others. []

Some 10 gunmen ambushed a vehicle carrying four Kurdish People's Democracy Party members on 24 June near Kayseri, killing three persons and wounding one other. No one claimed responsibility for the attack []

United Kingdom

Assailants armed with iron bars and a nail-studded club attacked a man on 27 June in Belfast, Northern Ireland. The *Provisional Irish Republican Army (PIRA)* is suspected []

Latin America

Colombia

Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (*FARC*) guerrillas burned two cattle ranches in Sucre Department on 12 June []

On 20 June *FARC* guerrillas killed the Caqueta Department governor. The victim was pulled out of his vehicle and shot nine times []

Honduras

Police defused a bomb found in a restroom at the Supreme Court building in Tegucigalpa on 12 June. An alleged member of the previously unknown group *Last Alternative Guerrilla Front* called and warned that the bomb had been placed in the building [redacted]

Peru

On 1 June in Nuevo Progreso, Tocache Province, 50 armed members of *Sendero Luminoso (SL)* attacked a convoy of vehicles carrying soldiers and civilians. They killed six civilians and one soldier and injured eight civilians and 10 soldiers. Three of the guerrillas also were killed during the attack [redacted]

Middle East

Algeria

A car bomb exploded outside a market in Blida on 22 June, killing seven persons and injuring seven others. Four terrorists are believed to have been killed by the explosion, which may have detonated prematurely. The *Armed Islamic Group (GIA)* is suspected [redacted]

Egypt

On 6 June assailants shot and killed a policeman and wounded three others guarding a police officers' rest house in Bani Suwayf. *Al-Gama'at al-Islamiyya* is suspected [redacted]

Israel

Unidentified assailants threw two firebombs at a bus traveling from Netanya to Jerusalem on 23 June, causing no casualties or damage. No one claimed responsibility for the attack [redacted]

Libya

On 20 June unidentified assailants killed eight police officers in an attack on a police training school in the eastern region of Darnah. No one claimed responsibility for the attack [redacted]

West Bank

Three unidentified assailants shot and killed an off-duty Israeli policeman and wounded his wife on 16 June in the Palestinian town of Biddiyya, near the Ari'el settlement. No one claimed responsibility for the attack [redacted]